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SUBJECT: MARCH 12 CPPCC OLYMPIC PRESS BRIEFING: PROTESTS,
SECURITY, OPENING CEREMONIES AND MORE

Summary

1. (U) Members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), the largely ceremonial advisory body that is currently in session in Beijing, held a press conference March 12 to discuss preparations for the August Olympic Games. CPPCC members present included Beijing Vice Mayor Liu Jingmin, General Administration of Sport Vice President Cui Dalin, Science and Technology Daily Director Zhang Jing'an, Beijing Organizing Committee Deputy Director for the Olympic Village Deng Yaping, and Director for the Olympic Opening and Closing Ceremonies Zhang Yimou. Highlights from the press conference:

-- Security for the Olympics is "guaranteed," despite recent Olympic-related threats. Protestors must apply for permission with Beijing security authorities to protest "in accordance with Chinese law."

-- Politburo Standing Committee (PBSC) member Xi Jinping will chair a "leader's task force" to "support" the final stages of Olympic preparations. Fellow PBSC member Zhou Yongkang along with Politburo Member and Beijing Party Secretary Liu Qi will serve as Xi's deputies on the task force.

-- Traffic control during the Games will include the use of odd/even license plate days, 280 km of Olympic lanes and the diversion of non-essential traffic around the city.

-- Zhang Yimou "personally regrets" Spielberg's resignation as an artistic consultant to the Games. Celebrities are not feeling pressured to participate in the Opening and Closing Ceremonies but do have to sign confidentiality agreements.

-- Olympic costs have been paid for by sponsorship fees. The Central and Beijing Municipal Governments have not directly paid for Olympic costs.

-- Beijing authorities are "confident" that there will be a "less than 10 percent chance" of rain during the Olympic opening ceremonies.

-- Medal counts are not the main priority for China. The General Administration of Sport says China is "still not a strong sports country like the United States and Russia." China will have a drug-free team during the Olympics and has increased anti-doping measures since 2006.

-- Macau has not been granted permission to have its own Olympic Committee due to a new International Olympic Committee regulation prohibiting non-sovereign states to have their own team. End Summary.

Olympic Safety is "Guaranteed"

12. (U) At the beginning of the March 12 CPPCC press conference to discuss preparations for the Olympic Games, Beijing Vice Mayor Liu Jingmin, responding to a security question on the effect of recent Olympic threats, including a plane hijacking in Urumqi last week, noted that he did not have full details about the case and had learned about the event through the media. Liu stated that BOCOG has taken five measures to "guarantee" security during the Olympics. One, the Central Government has established a national-level command center staffed by the Ministry of Public Security, the People's Liberation Army and other relevant security organizations. Two, there is a "comprehensive security plan." Three, the Chinese Government has increased communication and established liaison relationships with international security organizations. Liu cited Interpol's recent expression of confidence in Beijing's ability to host a safe games as an example. Four, security and venue construction have been closely linked. Five, there has been an increase in educating and training security staff and general Olympic personnel. With all these measures in place, Liu reiterated that "Olympic security can be guaranteed."

13. (U) Regarding protests, Liu added that "politics" should not ruin what was mainly an "athletic event." Whether protestors are local or foreign, Liu noted that they must apply to the relevant security agencies for a permit and act "in accordance with Chinese law."

Traffic Plans

14. (U) Liu said results from last year's Olympic test events illustrated that traffic congestion is not a matter of scale.

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Beijing was used to handling large-scale events such as the two million daily visitors to Beijing during a "Golden Week" holiday. The 16-day Olympic period was longer than the seven-day Golden Week, Liu admitted. However, tourism traffic during a Golden Week, while very different from traffic flow during entry and exit of an event from a large venue, showed that large-scale traffic was not the problem, congestion was. In order to address traffic, Beijing would establish 280 km of traffic lanes and follow an odd/even license plate program. The odd/even program was tested during last August's test events and resulted in a 30 percent decrease in traffic and 20-40 percent decrease in traffic-related pollution. In Athens and Sydney, most roads had two lanes of traffic each way. In Beijing there were three lanes of traffic each way, so normal traffic should not be adversely impacted, Liu stated. Vehicles supplying the daily needs of normal Beijing life, such as groceries, would be permitted into the city, while other traffic would be diverted around town. This traffic plan would ensure Beijing citizens could maintain a "normal life." In addition, Liu refuted any plans to divert the population for the Olympics. He noted that in Athens the Government had encouraged everyone to consolidate their vacation time around the Olympics but had not mandated anyone to leave.

Chance of Rain 10 Percent

15. (U) Worrying over the weather for the opening ceremonies was everyone's concern, said Liu. However, the Beijing and Central Weather Bureaus had formed a task force two years ago that has analyzed over 10 years worth of weather data. They will use Beijing One, a small weather satellite, to predict the weather and provide hourly updates during the Games. Based on past data, the chance of rain during the Opening Ceremony on August 8 is less than 10 percent. The chance of a thunderstorm is even less. Liu joked that the chance of a tornado was thus "non-existent."

16. (U) Liu was also "confident" in the good weather

prediction for the ascent of Mount Everest with the Olympic torch. He proclaimed last year's test ascent as "successful" due to the support of the General Administration of Sport, the Tibetan regional government and the weather bureaus.

¶7. (U) Zhang Yimou, director of Opening and Closing ceremonies (as well as a number of acclaimed films), talked about his concerns that weather could mar the ceremonies. Rehearsals for the ceremonies have already begun on the outskirts of Beijing. However, there are plans in place should there be "small, medium, or big rains." Zhang noted that if there were thunderstorms, then certain elements such as flying performers or some equipment would have to be eliminated from the program. All we can do is hope God protects us, Zhang said.

Spielberg's Resignation

¶8. (U) Zhang noted that he "personally regretted" Spielberg's resignation as an artistic consultant to the Games. He reminisced that Spielberg had traveled to Beijing twice last year with other artistic consultants and had "very much looked forward" to participating in the Games. Zhang reassured attendees that Opening Ceremony plans would not be impacted by the resignation, noting that the number of Chinese and foreign consultants involved in the ceremony is "extensive."

¶9. (U) Zhang refused to divulge any details about the ceremonies but did note that the Opening Ceremony show would be only 50 minutes. The total opening program would be 3.5 hours, but at least two hours would be devoted to the parade of athletes into the stadium. Zhang sighed that it was difficult to encompass five thousand years of Chinese history into 50 minutes and that he received "hundreds" of suggestions every day on what should be incorporated into the ceremony. He added that there would be elements of "East is Red" because he liked the color red, but that one needed more than just one color in a show.

Celebrity Censorship

¶10. (U) In a subtle reference to Bjork's recent protest, Zhang Yimou skirted the question of whether he was only allowed to pick celebrities from pre-approved lists. He did note that he was in constant contact with various celebrities about artistic questions and that there would be both Chinese and foreign performers in the ceremonies, but none felt

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"pressure." When asked his opinion about Kang Wei, the leading actress in the movie "Lust, Caution" who has been banned from the Chinese media, Zhang noted that this was a question for the artistic world and had nothing to do with the Olympics. Zhang added that he was good friends with Li Ang, the director of "Lust, Caution," who is a personal friend and artistic consultant to the Opening Ceremony department. They discussed artistic issues, but that was all, Zhang said.

¶11. (U) Zhang confirmed that all ceremony performers and staff had to sign a confidentiality agreement. He denied that there was a seven-year imprisonment penalty for leaking plans for the ceremony. Zhang added that the documentation was mostly IOC language with a few "Chinese amendments."

Post-Olympic Effects

¶12. (U) Vice Mayor Liu emphasized that Olympic operational costs had been primarily paid for by sponsorship fees. The Central and Beijing Governments gave tax breaks but did not directly invest in any Olympic projects. The Olympics will leave a "lasting legacy" in the form of improvements to

traffic, the environment and infrastructure, added Liu. The newest subway line, Line 5, has a daily passenger load of 500,000 people, significantly decreasing north/south traffic congestion on the city's east side. Three additional subway lines will further help traffic congestion. The Olympics' legacy is beyond the "hardware" and also includes more Chinese/foreign interaction and a better understanding of the Olympic spirit. Liu added that there had been an evident effect of the "humanistic Olympics" on an "increased morality."

¶13. (U) Olympic venues will be accessible to the public, confirmed Vice Mayor Liu. He explained that during the bidding process, all contractors were required to submit a post-Olympic use plan for the venue they wished to operate and demonstrate that they had the capital to implement it. The Water Cube, for example, would be transformed into a recreational water park and 11,000 of its 17,000 seats would be removed.

Drug-Free Olympics

¶14. (U) General Administration of Sport Vice President Cui Dalin reaffirmed that China would have a drug-free team in ¶2008. Cui noted that under the State Council's direction, the General Administration of Sport (GAOS) has emphasized prevention and education to prevent doping. The Central Government has built an anti-doping center and improved drug testing facilities. GAOS has also signed anti-doping contracts with all provincial sports bureaus, coaches and athletes. In 2007, over 10,000 athlete drug tests were conducted. When the World Anti-Doping Agency officials visited Beijing last year, they commented that they had full confidence in China and that the "Chinese model" was an example for the rest of the world.

High-Tech Olympics

¶15. (U) Zhang Jing'an, Director of the Science and Technology Daily and Secretary General of the Ministry of Science and Technology, expounded on efforts to have a "high-tech Olympics." Zhang described the Ministry of Science and Technology's task force that included 13 organizations from the Beijing Municipal Government, Ministry of Education and other institutions. He noted that there were action plans ranging from energy-saving vehicles, reusable energy, water treatment and green construction techniques. 500 "green" cars, including electric cars used within the Olympic Green and hybrid cars used throughout town, would be examples of clean transportation. Reusable energy sources would be used to power Olympic venues. Water would be recycled, including 80 percent of rain water in venues, and all waste water would be treated. Construction of the venues utilized advanced techniques that were all done locally including the super-strong concrete for the National Stadium. Zhang also noted that the torch's design reflected the hi-tech characteristics of the Olympics by overcoming three challenges during the ascent of Mount Everest: low temperature, high wind and lack of oxygen.

Medal Count Not Goal

¶16. (U) Vice President Cui Dalin refuted claims that the

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Chinese Olympic team was aiming to have the largest medal haul in the 2008 Olympics. "China is still not a strong sports country like the United States and Russia," Cui lamented. Cui supported his statement by noting that the United States had won 103 medals in the 2004 Olympics in Athens, while China had only won 63. He added that in just two non-Olympic events in 2007, the United States had won 17 gold medals in swimming and 14 in track and field, which was

almost equal to China's total gold medal count in 2004. Instead of aiming for a medal count, the Chinese Olympic team was following a "holistic approach" aimed at contributing to a "harmonious society" through: 1) developing the Olympic spirit among China's athletes, 2) inducing national pride in the team through enhanced sportsmanship and economic development for the country through promotion of the sports industry, 3) increasing international exchanges, and 4) increasing Chinese citizens' passion for sports and healthiness through public fitness programs and competition.

Olympic Village With Chinese Characteristics

¶17. (U) Deng Yaping, Deputy Director of the Olympic Village for the Beijing Organizing Committee for the 29th Olympiad Games (BOCOG) and a former ping-pong Olympic gold medalist, reported on Olympic village construction. Deng announced that village construction was in accordance with International Olympic Committee (IOC) regulations and that athletes that had competed in Athens and Sydney would find all the standard facilities. However, while the infrastructure of the Olympic village is to IOC specifications, the customer service and other "soft touches" will display "Chinese characteristics" and uphold the principles of a "humanistic Olympics." (Note: A "humanistic Olympics" is one of the three Chinese Olympic goals, the other two being a "green Olympics" and a "hi-tech Olympics." End note.) BOCOG's cultural department is currently arranging for cultural activities/performances in the village to showcase Chinese culture. There will be three areas in the village: 1) the residential area, 2) the operational area and 3) the international zone. The international zone will be available for the press to interview athletes, offer shopping for the athletes and be the site of the flag-raising ceremony.

Macau Wants To Establish Its Own Team

¶18. (U) Cui remarked that the Minister of Sport, Liu Peng, had petitioned the IOC to support the establishment of a Macau Olympic Committee similar to that of Hong Kong and Chinese Taipei. (Note: Chinese Taipei is the official name under which Taiwan competes in the Olympics. End note.) Cui noted that despite the Chinese Olympic Committee's support for Macau there has been no resolution of this case since the IOC's new regulation restricts Olympic Committees to sovereign nations only.

Yao Ming Recovering

¶19. (U) Cui noted that the Chinese Basketball Association is in continuous contact with the National Basketball Association in the United States regarding Yao Ming's health. Yao Ming's March 3 surgery was successful, but given China's "respect for athletes," whether Yao chooses to play depends on his and his doctor's opinions. The Chinese basketball team, in the meantime, is preparing to play without Yao, Cui stated.

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